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## CURATED COLLECTION: Emotion and Learning

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I am delighted to have been invited to curate a collection of JME papers on emotion and learning. Several years ago I published a paper in JME called 'Behind and Beyond Kolb's Learning Cycle' (Vince, 1998). The aim of this paper was to highlight aspects of experiential learning that were undeveloped in Kolb's model, including the impact of individual and group emotion on experiential learning as well as the power relations that surround and pervade learning in context. It has been fascinating for me to revisit my earlier paper alongside the various articles (from 1988 to 2014) that the Editors asked me to consider for the Curated Collection. In so doing, I reflect on some of the themes and issues raised by the collection as well as implications for future scholarship and teaching practice. I hope that reading my thoughts and the articles included in this collection will inspire renewed interest in emotion and learning, and that this will lead to interesting new manuscripts for JME.

I have made a very personal selection of papers. My selection focuses on contradiction and complexity (not on attempts to manage emotion or to split positive from negative emotions). I have chosen papers that represent bravery and inventiveness in the classroom. They challenge both faculty and students to learn from their individual emotional responses to what happens in the management classroom, as well as the collective emotional dynamics that are co-created there. These papers offer knowledge to help us design spaces for learning that emphasize and mirror the emotional dynamics of organizations.

I start with two context setting papers at completely the opposite ends of my time line. These two papers can be read together in order to get a sense both of how much has changed and how much has remained the same around this theme. In '*Dealing with emotions in the classroom*' (Bowen, Seltzer and Wilson, 1988) the authors pose the question – what is the role of emotions in the classroom? Their answer provides us with an early map of the emotional life of the OB classroom and particularly 'common psychoses and defense mechanisms' (p. 7) as well as some examples and recommendations for practice. Even after 26 years I find that the paper resonates well with the underlying dynamics of my own classroom (although I would not say the words 'common psychoses' out loud). It also reflects the way in which group relations and 'T-group' insights continue to be an important underlying knowledge base for teaching and learning about emotions in organizations.

In *'Emotions in organizations: resources for business educators'* (Bowen, 2014)<sup>1</sup> the author provides a review of emotion theories combined with a review of published classroom exercises and pedagogical approaches 'to provide teaching resources to those starting to integrate emotion into existing courses' (p. 114). The main shift that I perceive in this 26-year gap is from the identification of underlying emotional dynamics toward an articulation of potential benefits of emotion skill and knowledge. Bowen's (2014) argument is that, for the manager, learning about and through emotion prepares them for the workplace in general and helps people within work roles to engage more effectively with 'group performance, decision making, leadership development, interpersonal relationships and stress reduction', as well as improving 'knowledge retention and recall' (p. 115). Perhaps this reflects a broader shift in Business and Management Schools towards the more explicit articulation of learning outcomes and a much stronger concern with the creation of value (for our 'customers'). She also argues that important contributions to knowledge come from the classroom as 'research laboratories through which the field can advance'. I agree with this idea, but I also know that it is tied to a set of political imperatives about academic productivity in Business and Management Schools. The radical potential of our insights and approaches to teaching and learning always sit alongside the political purposes they may serve.

These two papers share a set of assumptions about the relationship between emotion and learning. These are: enlisting emotions for learning, encouraging students to engage in direct emotional expression, capitalizing on emotion as teaching opportunities, and (thereby) preparing students for their encounters with the emotional processes embedded in organizations. The consistency across time around this theme is heartening because it speaks to the ongoing relevance of the issue to management education and the importance of continuing to champion it. However, I also find it somewhat depressing that emotional aspects of learning within and about management and organization are not so obvious and ever-present that they are already integral to Business and Management School thinking and practice.

Of course, not every faculty member, student or practitioner shares the passion, or believes in the importance of the risks involved in mobilizing emotion in the classroom. The passion for working with and through emotions in the classroom is well represented by *'Learning through emotion'* (Lindsay, 1992). Whereas some of the earlier papers in the overall collection are informed by the application of psychodynamic theory into the management classroom (Bowen, Seltzer and Wilson, 1988; French, 1997; Vince, 1998), Lindsay (1992) emphasizes emotion in the classroom 'as a basis for learning the meaning of OB' (p. 25) and therefore, 'the continual need to be honest, open and trusting with one's emotions and the emotions of others' (p. 37). The underlying aim of this position is to break through emotional barriers that reinforce teachers and students within their roles, and to thereby facilitate dialogue from the point of view that 'there is no teacher who is not also a learner and no learner who is not also a teacher' (p. 29).

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<sup>1</sup> I could not help being drawn to the fact that the paper by Bowen, Seltzer and Wilson, 1988 and the paper by Bowen, 2014 included scholars with the same surname. I felt compelled to email Janine Bowen (2014) to ask if she was in any way related to Donald Bowen (1988). She kindly replied that she wished there was a relation... but there wasn't. I had to ask.

One of the key aspects of the interplay between emotion and learning is captured most effectively in Lewis and Dehler (2000) '*Learning through paradox*'. This article provides the reader with 'a pedagogical strategy for exploring contradictions and complexity' (p. 710). In my experience, working with emotion in the Business and Management School classroom means focusing on contradictions in order to critique and move beyond the dull didactics that inhibit opportunities to understand complex inter-personal and organizational dynamics. I do not find organizations to be overly rational environments. They are replete with emotions and politics that can make them feel like messy, uncertain and confusing places. I believe that Lewis and Dehler (2000) are right when they say that 'educators have to intentionally generate some degree of uncertainty and confusion... (for) creative tension' (p. 710) and to provide a space where it is possible to learn about the emotions and politics that surround and infuse our everyday roles and relations.

A powerful illustration of this creative tension is available in '*Organized for genocide: student reactions and learning from use of emotive documentaries on the Holocaust*' (Kearney et al, 2013). The authors demonstrate the importance of 'deliberately introducing emotionally loaded data into the learning environment and exploring the responses of students' (p. 344). They also show how such actions relate reflexively to the management educator's role and an understanding of what they are doing. The authors ask to what extent there is a risk that students might respond in a way that inhibits deep learning. 'We have no immediate answer... but real organizational situations rarely stop to ask whether or not we can handle it or if we are ready' (Kearney et al, 2013 p. 362). I find this understanding realistic, courageous and inspiring.

A very different theory of emotion and learning in management education has also been investigated and developed in JME. Emotional intelligence (Brown, 2003; Cambell-Clark, Callister and Wallace, 2003) emphasizes the idea that emotions in organizations can be managed, that it is possible to 'harness one's emotions, make them an ally, and use them to make intelligent behaviour choices' (Brown, 2003 p. 123). This can be achieved through learning a set of skills and 'self-monitoring techniques' (Cambell-Clark, Callister and Wallace, 2003) that encourage the application of rational capabilities so that people do not 'remain hostage to their changing emotions and moods' (Brown, 2003 p. 125). My own view of EI is that attempts to reason with, control, understand, and manage emotion are inevitably limited. The contradictory nature of emotions in organizations means that, for example, self-awareness may at times be the same as self-deception; emotion management and regulation may contribute to the avoidance of change; and being well tuned to the emotions of others may involve putting them in our shoes rather than trying to put ourselves into theirs. Such contradictions, arising from individuals' need to be selective in the emotions they express, can help people to understand, for example, that negative feelings may be 'cloaked under a mask of bland cheerfulness' (Gibson, 2006 p. 491).

I also feel suspicious of approaches that accentuate the positive in management education (Nielsen, Winter and Saatcioglu, 2005; Karakas, 2011). Separating positive from negative emotion, when both are intimately connected (Fineman, 2006), means letting go of the constructive tension that is so important to the interplay between emotion and learning. In addition, a refusal to accept the dark side of positivity reduces

our ability to perceive important contradictions in emotional experience within organizations; for example, to understand the harm that our 'helpfulness' might cause.

A theme of a number of the papers in the overall collection is on emotions associated with teaching about diversity and difference (Chavez and Poirier, 2007; Dugal and Eriksen, 2004; Kirk and Durant, 2010; Spelman, 2010). My selection on this theme is: '*Crossing the line: framing appropriate responses in the diversity classroom*' (Kirk and Durant, 2010). In this paper, the tutor has a powerful emotional reaction to a student's strongly held opinion on a diversity issue. The process of working this through, and the dialogues within and outside of the classroom, provide the reader with a very subtle set of reactions and interactions that demonstrate the complexities and struggles of teaching diversity. This is a paper that is not that explicit about emotion and yet is full of the emotions mobilized by teaching about difference. Once again, I like the reflexive stance of the authors. I find the doubt in the statement: 'I do not know whether... (there was) any significant change in how this student sees others he perceives as different from himself' (Kirk and Durant, 2010 p. 843) is so much more credible and engaging than, for example, the certainty that an exercise will 'facilitate an understanding of and appreciation for organizational diversity' (Dugal and Eriksen, 2004 p. 493).

The art of management education is a collective theme, which I hope will continue to expand and develop in the pages of JME (Van Buskirk and London, 2007 and 2012; Taylor and Statler, 2013). '*Material matters: increasing emotional engagement in learning*' (Taylor and Statler, 2013) is an innovative journey into how 'the experience and the expression of emotions can be enabled or constrained by different (art) materials' (p. 1). The paper sketches the inter-relationships involving materials, emotions and learning as well as discussing practical ideas for engaging students' emotions through the use of different materials. In the authors' words: 'Educators can manipulate the level of student engagement by intentionally selecting materials and integrating them into a learning process and in so doing increase the effectiveness of that process' (Taylor and Statler, 2013 p. 10). I see the art of management as a key theme for the development of innovations in practice, in particular those having to do with emotion and learning.

Papers on emotion and learning published in JME show how the journal has consistently supported ways of thinking about and engaging students with this issue. Existing scholarship provides a broad framework from which to further develop our thinking and teaching practice and it raises a number of questions for the future. These include:

- *How can we help management educators and students to better understand the underlying emotional dynamics of management learning and education?* This might include, for example, further insights into the ways in which unconscious processes or pervasive fantasies affect teacher and student behaviour in the classroom, as well as how this mirrors such dynamics within organizations.
- *How can we continue to unsettle the ways in which the roles of teacher and student are enacted in order to mobilize emotions and engage with power relations in the classroom?* This might include, for example, in-depth reflection on emotional

experience and a greater understanding of the role of reflexivity in our approach to management education.

- *How can we comprehend more about the reasons and advantages of using emotionally loaded data and of generating uncertainties and confusion as a basis for learning?* The contradictions and paradoxical tensions that are integral to organizations suggest that rational and instrumental approaches to development are likely to be inadequate to the task.
- *How can we better understand management educators' responses to and responsibilities towards emotions in the classroom?* There are consequences to taking the risk to engage with emotions and learning, for example, for faculty who may have to depend on favorable teaching ratings for promotion.
- *How can we further the art of management education?* There are likely to be many more creative, inspirational and effective ways of working that help students to engage with emotions in organizations and that help to transform our practice.

In addition to my enjoyment of existing scholarship on emotion and learning in JME, I am very much looking forward to future papers on this fundamental aspect of teaching and learning about behaviour in organizations.

#### **Articles on emotion and learning in JME**

(Selected by the Editors; underlined articles discussed above)

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The Teacher as Container of Anxiety: Psychoanalysis and the Role of Teacher; French, Robert B.; Journal of Management Education, Nov 1997; vol. 21: pp. 483-495

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Emotions And Behavior: Exercises In Emotional Intelligence; Brown, Randall B.; Journal of Management Education, Feb 2003; vol. 27: pp. 122-134

Understanding and Transcending Team Member Differences: A Felt-Experience Exercise; Dugal, Sanjiv S., Eriksen, Matthew; Journal of Management Education, Aug 2004; vol. 28: pp. 492-508

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Emotional Episodes at Work: An Experiential Exercise in Feeling and Expressing Emotions; Gibson, Donald E.; Journal of Management Education, Jun 2006; vol. 30: pp. 477-500

Stimulating Cultural Appetites: an Experiential Gourmet Approach; Chavez, Carolyn I., Hu Poirier, Vickie; Journal of Management Education, Aug 2007; vol. 31: pp. 505-520

Inviting the Muse Into the Classroom: Poetic License in Management Education; Van Buskirk, William, London, Michael; Journal of Management Education, Jun 2008; vol. 32: pp. 294-315

Crossing the Line: Framing Appropriate Responses in the Diversity Classroom; Kirk, Delaney J., Durant, Rita; Journal of Management Education, Dec 2010; vol. 34: pp. 823-847

Recognizing the Centrality of Emotion in Diversity Courses: Commentary on "Gender in the Management Education Classroom"; Spelman, Duncan; Journal of Management Education, Dec 2010; vol. 34: pp. 882-890

Positive Management Education: Creating Creative Minds, Passionate Hearts, and Kindred Spirits; Karakas, Fahri; Journal of Management Education, Apr 2011; vol. 35: pp. 198-226

Poetry as Deep Intelligence: A Qualitative Approach for the Organizational Behavior Classroom; Van Buskirk, William, London, Michael; Journal of Management Education, Oct 2012; vol. 36: pp. 636-668

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Material Matters: Increasing Emotional Engagement in Learning; Taylor, Steven S., Statler, Matt; Journal of Management Education, August 2014; vol. 38: doi: pp 586-607

Emotion in Organizations: Resources for Business Educators; Bowen, Janine L.; Journal of Management Education, Feb 2014; vol. 38: pp. 114-142

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